

Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about ECFA (Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement)

陸

Putonghua pronunciation: *lu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *luk6*

Meanings: land, short for Mainland China

陸 = 陸地 (*lu4 di4* = continents~land). 陸上 (*lu4 shang4* = land~above) = on land. 中國大陸 (*zhong1 guo2 da4 lu4* = middle-kingdom/state~big~land) = Mainland China. 登陸 (*deng1 lu4* = mount~land) describes marines' military action and businessmen going to China.

北京 (*bei3 jing1* = Beijing), 台北 (*tai2 bei3* = Taipei) signed 兩岸經濟協議 (*liang3 an4 jing1 ji4 xie2 yi4* = two~coasts~manage~irrigate~together~discuss = Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement = ECFA, 2010). "Two coasts" = two sides of 台灣海峽 (*tai2 wan1 hai3 xia2* = Tai~wan~sea~strait = Taiwan Strait).

ECFA will boost 雙邊貿易 (*shuang1 bian1 mao4 yi4* = pair~sides~trade~exchange = bilateral trade), improve 陸台關係 (*lu4 tai2 guan1 xi4* = Mainland~Taiwan~concern~link = Mainland-Taiwan relations).